

BANISHED BY GOD

Romans 1 18-32

Intro: (Read the text.)

Anyone who has read the first chapter of Romans prayerfully and thoughtfully, cannot have failed to notice the repetition of an expression which the Apostle Paul used three times in the latter part of the chapter. I am speaking of the expression that “God also gave them up” in verse 24, and then in verse 26, “God gave them up,” and finally in verse 28, “God gave them over.” All of these expressions are the translation of the same Greek verb, the verb παραδίδωμι. *To give up*, or *to give over*, are good translations because the word suggests *handing people over to what they have chosen to do, or be, and causing them to suffer the consequences of their own choice*. It is more than just letting people go; it is more than an abandonment. I was struck with a word which Thayer in his Greek lexicon used, the word *banished*. He said that this word was used in a Jewish formula of excommunication when one was supposedly “deprived of the protection of God and delivered up to the power of the devil” (Thayer, p. 481). It is an expression of judgment. It is more than just letting people go; it means *putting them out*.

The dictionary, of course, speaks of a banishment as when a person is forced to leave a country, either his own or some other country, usually with no permission to return.

This is a very solemn expression when “God” is the subject of this verb because it can have eternal consequences. It shows that there can come a time when the patience of God is exhausted with some person, or even with a nation. We don’t know when this might happen. This is determined by God Himself. But people can be banished by God and from God, to suffer in time, and possibly in eternity, the consequences of their rejection of God. God’s mercy and God’s patience are seemingly inexhaustible, but there come a time when *banishment* is the action which God takes.

There is a four line verse that I heard and memorized many years ago that expresses the truth that this verb, παραδίδωμι, expresses. It goes like this:

There is a line by us unseen;
It crosses every path.
It is the boundary between
God’s patience and His wrath.

Both the Scriptures and world history testify to the truth of this passage of Scripture. It does not necessarily mean that when a person is banished by God, there is no hope at all for a change, but it appears that when God makes such a move, in most cases it is permanent.

To a great extent this passage is a survey of world history. Nations rise, and nations fall, always under the judgment of God. And the same is true of individuals. Increasingly it seems to be a commentary on the course that our nation has taken. God really has no place in our national life. We give lip service to Him, and pray when we get into trouble. But on a day to day basis we have become increasingly a nation which refuses to submit to God and to His Word. We justify whatever we want to do, and if someone rebukes us with Scripture, we tell them that an old book like the Bible has nothing to do with life in the twentieth century. And if there are things which the Bible condemns as sin, we have no hesitation in legalizing it if it is something that we want to do.

Now it is clear from this passage of Scripture, that God has given adequate testimony that He exists, and that He is God.

I. THE TESTIMONY OF GOD (Rom. 1:19-20).

I have said repeatedly that there are no true atheists, no people who can honestly say that there is no God. And I say it because of the evidence that we have here in verses 19 and 20.

A. God has placed His testimony in every human heart (v. 19).

God has personally seen to it that planted in every human heart throughout all human history, is the recognition that there is a God.

B. God has placed the evidence of His existence in creation (v. 20).

Regardless of what people tell you notice what this verse says. We see evidence in creation itself not only of His existence, but of "His eternal power and Godhead." And it is so strong that God says (and we need to believe Him) that "they are without excuse." No man will ever be able to claim ignorance when he stands in the presence of God, as though he had not been informed that there was a sovereign God Who exists eternally, Who created the heavens and the earth, and Who keeps it in operation. And the work of the Lord in life from day to day is more detailed than we might think. I am reading the NKJV this year in my Bible reading, and I

was struck with a statement in Psalm 29, the Psalm which has so much to say about the voice of the Lord. What struck me was the statement in verse 9 that “the voice of the Lord makes the deer give birth. Think of all of the deer that are born throughout the world every year, and each one gives birth because the Lord tells it to give birth. Many other wonders could be cited.

II. WHAT, THEN, IS THE PROBLEM?

Why don't more people recognize God, and seek God, and fear God? Let us go back to verse 18, and we will find our answer there. (Read v. 18.)

Our KJV tells us that it is because men “hold the truth in unrighteousness.” The verb “hold” means *to hold down the truth, or to suppress the truth*. People ignore the testimony that God has placed in their hearts, and they believe Darwin's lie and the many lies of his followers rather than acknowledging the truth that is evident before their very eyes every day.

And so what have they done? According to verse 25 they have “changed the truth of God into a lie,” and they believe the lies rather than the truth of God.

Now Paul has not mentioned here that God has given us His Word, nor that God has sent His Son to reveal Him. All that God has done in the consciences of men, and in creation, are sufficient to make it impossible for any man to say that there is no God.

So, as a result, we read in verse 21 that man has refused to glorify God as God, man is not thankful to God for His many blessings. Man has become proud, and thinking that he is wise he has become the worst of fools.

And so what has man done? Read verse 23. He has made gods out of mere creatures, and lifeless images of them at that. Idolatry is not man's recognition of God; it is the evidence that man has rejected God. And now the scene is set for the Apostle Paul to speak of how God banishes man when the light that God has given to him is rejected.

III. MAN BANISHED BY GOD (Rom. 1:24-32).

A. The first banishment (vv. 24-25).

We read in our Bibles of the effect that idolatry had upon the children of Israel. Idolatry led the worshipers of Baal to mutilate their bodies when

they knew that they were losing their contest with Elijah. And it is a well known fact that idolatrous religions have always been accompanied by gross immorality. Many of the NT believers were saved out of that kind of living. People without shame worship and serve “the creature more than the Creator.”

I wonder if we haven't stepped over this line right here in America. I think that if we have pets, we ought to take care of them; we always did when our children were young. But don't you feel sometimes that this has gotten beyond reason here in the U.S.? People spend more money on their animals than they have ever thought of giving to the Lord. And they show more love for their animals than they do for the Lord.

Remember that all of this is evidence that people have been banished by God.

B. The second banishment (Rom. 1:26-27).

People in our day don't like to hear what the Apostle Paul wrote 2,000 years ago, but the truth of God does not change.

Here where Paul was obviously discussing homosexuality, he called it “vile affections.” And it was Dr. Lewis Johnson who first pointed out to me that homosexual activity in any country is not an evidence that that nation is facing the possibility of judgment from God, *but it is evidence that our nation is already under the judgment of God!* The problem is, most people don't realize that we are already a nation under judgment. Our parents and grandparents would be shocked speechless if they could see what is going on today, and how it is supported so wholeheartedly by many, maybe most, of our politicians. And so we get deeper and deeper into trouble.

Homosexuality is a sign, just one sign, but a terrible sign, of our banishment as a nation from God.

But the Apostle Paul was not through. He was preparing to use the word *banish* for the third time.

C. The third banishment (Rom. 1:28-31).

It just gets worse. In spite of all of the trouble that our rejection of God has gotten us into, people persist in rejecting God. They still do not want to have anything to do with God. They refuse to submit to Him. They

refuse to seek Him, repenting of their sins, and seeking His mercy in salvation. The prophets of the OT called upon the people of Israel and Judah to repent, and so often it was in vain until finally God *banished* them from their own land.

But look at this passage before us now. Look at the list of sins that Paul has given us, and think of how prevalent these are in our country today, and even throughout the world.

Paul called these the actions of “a reprobate mind.” This means a mind that approves what God disapproves. And these are “not convenient.” What did Paul mean by that? He meant that they do things which makes life absolutely impossible.

As you read down the list of sins, you can see that there are some that people definitely don't like, but there others that they feel that they can put up with, and some that people actually enjoy. But all are sin, and people have no choice as to what sins will come. That is a part of the judgment of God Himself.

Think of what our newspapers have brought to us in brutal, serial murders that have been committed. Remember how Atlanta, Georgia has made the news recently. Who knows what is going to happen next? Kosovo is like a keg of dynamite in spite of the fact that there are 35,000 so-called peace keepers over there.

If there is a chapter of the Bible that needs to be spread all over the world, it is Romans 1.

But this chapter ends with what we can call,

IV. THE CROWNING SHAME (Rom. 1:32).

Man is not going to change. He is a slave to his own sin, his rebellion against God. And he is so ignorant of the truth and so God-less in his heart, that he will go on in his sin even knowing that judgment comes now, and worse judgment is yet to come.

Concl: What is the answer? The answer is to be found in the Bible, and it is called in Rom. 1:1, “the Gospel of God.” You and I would be just like the world's crowd if it were not for the grace of God. Only God can change the human heart. It is interesting that people are beginning to ask, What has gone wrong? But unless God has mercy upon any sinner, he

will try every other thing that he might feel will work, before he will turn to the Lord.

— May God give us the same kind of a burden that filled the heart of the Apostle Paul when he wrote what he did in Rom. 1:13-17. We have the answer to man's need, the only answer, and it is to be found in the Gospel message. May it also be that the Lord will so move upon our hearts that we will live like the Apostle Peter told the believers of his day to live, seeking to please the Lord in all that we do so that people will ask us for a reason of the hope that is in us. And then we can tell them about Christ.

Let us make sure that we know the Lord. And if we are not sure, let's make sure. And may our lives demonstrate the marvelous grace of God Who has saved us from sin, and from sinning.

—

—